



Drumbeat: September 8, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Interview with Bob Hirsch - The Stonewalling of Peak Oil](#)

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Yes, that was terrible. And it was strictly politics and political appointees—I have no idea how far up in either administration (the current one and previous one) these issues went or now go. People in the Clinton administration had talked about peak oil, including President Clinton and Vice President Gore, and the same thing is true in the Bush administration, and the same is true, to the best of my knowledge, in the Obama administration.

The peak oil story is definitely a bad news story. There's just no way to sugar-coat it, other than maybe to do what I've done on occasion and that is to say that by 2050 we'll have it right and we will have come through the peak oil recession—quite probably a very deep recession. At some point we'll come out of this because we're human beings, and we just don't give up. And I have faith in people ultimately. But it's a bad news story and anybody's who's going to stand up and talk about the bad news story and is in a position of responsibility in the government needs to then follow immediately and say "here's what we're going to do about it," and no one seems prepared to do that.

expects oil demand growth to resume by 900,000 barrels per day (bd) in 2010 and return to its 2007 high of 86.5 million barrels per day (mbd) by 2012—a five year turnaround.

"There are a lot of questions as to whether things will be 'different this time' in terms of the recovery of oil demand," said IHS CERA chairman and Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Prize*, Daniel Yergin. "While the answer is that it will be shorter, it is still going to take a substantial amount of time."

[OPEC's Waning Influence](#)

LONDON -- When oil prices were soaring in early 2008, the Organization of Petroleum-

Exporting Countries was under intense pressure to raise its supply quotas. When they plummeted at the end of last year, OPEC had to scramble to cut them. Now? Supply and demand simply don't mean much anymore, after six months of rallying stock markets and a ramp-up in investor optimism, and Wednesday's OPEC meeting is unlikely to change things.

[Norwegian oil spending faces reshaping](#)

Norway's largest opposition party aims to slash state stakes in leading companies and change rules limiting the amount of oil money that can be tapped to fund a vast public works programme, its leader said today.

['Iraq pay could take years'](#)

Western oil companies operating in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region may have to wait for years for the government to pay them for the oil they pump, Talisman Energy's chief executive John Manzoni said today.

[Schlumberger sees no big mergers in oil services](#)

ABERDEEN (Reuters) - Larger U.S. oil services companies are unlikely to buy each other, the Chief Executive of industry leader Schlumberger said, despite speculation that a new round of industry consolidation was coming.

Andrew Gould said anti-trust issues would preclude companies such as Schlumberger, the world's largest provider of services to oil companies by market value, from buying rivals.

[Petrobras restarts Tupi oil field test production](#)

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Brazilian state-run oil company Petrobras said on Tuesday it has restarted test production at the Tupi oil field after an equipment problem forced it to halt operations in early July.

The massive Tupi field holds 5 billion to 8 billion barrels of oil and is one of the most promising in Brazil's offshore subsalt province, an area the South American nation hopes will turn it into a major energy exporter.

[Tropical Storm Fred gains strength in Atlantic](#)

MIAMI - Tropical Storm Fred, which formed in the eastern Atlantic Ocean late on

Monday, was strengthening early on Tuesday with maximum sustained winds of 65 mph, but did not immediately threaten any land.

Forecasters with the U.S. National Hurricane Center said Fred was gradually becoming more organized and had the potential to become a hurricane within the next 36 hours.

[Chill settles on once-hot solar panel companies](#)

Summer may be winding down, but investors holding solar energy stocks are getting one nasty burn. Shares of companies that make solar panels have flamed out this year, missing out on what's been a significant recovery in the stock market.

[MNN vs. Slate, round three: The big battery debate](#)

Carmakers say they're ready to roll out EVs, but we're going to need plug-ready charging stations, too. Some say Chevy Volt-type "range extenders" will work better than big battery packs. Are electric cars coming soon, or will they short circuit? An MNN/Slate debate.

[Clotheslines a hang-up for some communities](#)

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — Devin Ceartas would no sooner give up drying his laundry on a clothesline than he would dig up his spice garden, overturn his rain barrel or get rid of his compost heap.

Air drying is one of the simple, old-fashioned ways the 42-year-old computer programmer and his wife try to make their life in a Chapel Hill subdivision kinder to the environment.

So when their homeowners' association told them two years ago to take down the clothesline, they organized their neighbors. Today, laundry hangs freely from the backyard balconies of Village West townhouses, and aesthetic complaints can be taken up with Ceartas, who last fall became association president.

[Feeding the future: Saving agricultural biodiversity](#)

(CNN) -- When the chips are down, the world may one day owe a debt of gratitude to a group of potato farmers high up in the mountains of Peru.

Thanks to a new \$116 million global fund established this summer, the Quechua Indians are being paid to maintain their diverse collection of rare potatoes and ensure that they will be available to help the world adapt to future climate change.

[Miliband says poorer nations must act for climate deal](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Developing countries like China and India must accept curbs on their greenhouse gas emissions if the world is to agree a new climate change treaty this year, British government ministers said on Tuesday.

Foreign Secretary David Miliband said there was a real risk that talks in Denmark in December to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol will fail as politicians focus on the economic downturn rather than the longer-term threat of climate change.

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[Starving in silence: *With no machines and all the livestock eaten, quiet lingers in rural areas of nation where 8.7 million face hunger*](#)

In a country where citizens are subjected to ceaseless propaganda telling them that they live in a socialist paradise, it's the silence that tells the other side of the story.

You can stand in the middle of some Pyongyang streets, even at rush hour, and hear only the occasional sound of an automobile engine because private cars are so rare. The quiet lingers, too, in the so-called industrial towns, their skylines dominated by

smokestacks that never seem to be in use.

The silence is the sound of an economy in collapse, and nowhere is it more noticeable than in the countryside beyond the showcase capital city. Here, farmers tend their crops with hoes, shovels and their bare hands while the occasional piece of rusting farm equipment - rendered useless by a fuel shortage - sits idle amid the vast fields of rice and corn.

[The Price Is Right](#)

Uncertainty about future oil prices has put a freeze on many new energy-related construction projects. But deals that have managed to go forward are incurring dramatically lower costs, thanks to decreased demand for construction and engineering contractors, as well as such materials as cement bags and gas-carrying pipes. This is likely to boost profits when oil prices and demand make a strong comeback—as many experts expect—around 2012.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, to which Algeria belongs, says member countries have put 35 exploration and production projects on the back burner and cut investment plans by \$50 billion over the next five years.

Still, some companies are swimming against the current to take advantage of the subsequent downturn in the market for construction and engineering contractors.

[China top refiners to run at record in Sept](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - Top Chinese refineries will modestly raise their crude oil processing in September to their record levels in July, as a big increase in throughput in a new plant more than offset moderate cuts in some others.

Twelve major plants accounting for more than a third of China's capacity, most of them on the eastern and southern seaboard, will process 2.65 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in September, up slightly from the actual 2.63 million bpd in August, a Reuters poll showed.

[A Review of the Saudi Economy: On the Brink of Recovery](#)

Government spending is the key source of dynamism within the economy. Expenditure seems to be above budget and is likely to pick up further as implementation of those projects recently signed or retendered begins. In contrast, many private sector businesses face problems accessing finance. Given the caution within commercial banks only modest growth in lending is expected over the near-term. SAMA has made the environment conducive to lending once banks become less risk averse and interest rates are expected to stay very low. With oil prices likely to be in excess of the budgeted level,

we expect only a very small budget deficit despite the anticipated overspending. The deficit on the current account will be larger, but is not a concern.

[Russia blasts Ukraine over European gas transit](#)

President Dmitry Medvedev on Monday accused Ukraine of seeking to change an agreement on fees for the transit of Russian gas across its territory, raising the spectre of a new energy crisis between the two states.

The chief executive of Russian gas giant Gazprom, Alexei Miller, told Medvedev in a meeting that Ukraine was seeking change the terms of payment for gas transit fees, a change that is not stipulated in the current contract.

[The New Nukes](#)

The next generation of nuclear reactors is on its way, and supporters say they will be safer, cheaper and more efficient than current plants. Here's a look at what's coming -- and when.

[Let the Sun Shine](#)

The solar industry has been struggling this year against weak demand, ample supply and sliding prices. Which means that for anyone thinking about putting solar panels on their roof, there probably hasn't been a better time.

All along the supply chain, prices have been falling, and could fall further still. Silicon, a main ingredient in most panels, has been selling for as little as half what it went for a year ago, while some panels and installed systems can be had for 25% less, retailers and installers say. Throw in a 30% rebate offered by the U.S. government, plus rebates in California, New Jersey, New York and other states, and, depending on where you live, you could be looking at \$15,750 for a system that would have cost nearly twice as much a year ago when the federal rebate was much smaller.

[Arguing From the Inside](#)

Here's a thing you don't see very often: the head of one of the world's dirtiest industries making common cause with climate-change campaigners.

[Seeds for Change](#)

Rural electric co-ops have lagged behind other utilities in shifting to alternative energy.

That's starting to change.

[Frost & Sullivan: Biofuels An Important Step In Achieving A Greener Aviation Industry](#)

Singapore, /PRNewswire/ - Aircraft emissions, ground transportation and related travel in the airline and airports business contribute to air pollution and global warming, and carbon reduction in this area has long been an area of research. In 2008 alone, U.S. passenger and cargo airline operations required 16.1 billion gallons or approximately 382.4 million barrels of jet fuel.

[Power Plays](#)

There has been a resurgence of investment interest in the U.S. biofuel industry focused on technologies that use algae to make fuel.

The appeal of algae is that it can potentially produce fuel without diverting food crops or large swathes of land. Ethanol derived from corn has been blamed by some for driving up food prices, while large-scale production of cellulosic ethanol would require cultivation of plants such as switchgrass that are grown only in small amounts now.

[The PC Goes on an Energy Diet](#)

Personal computers suck up enormous amounts of electricity—often when they aren't even being used. Manufacturers are tackling the problem.

[Mideast climate change and its strategic implications](#)

The strategic implications of climate change in the Middle East focus on a few key issues – fresh water resources, increasing desertification and shifting weather patterns. In the past, these issues were divisive on the regional level. With climate change, their strategic implications become more prominent.

One of the most divisive issues contributing to conflict in the Middle East is water scarcity. Thomas Homer-Dixon, a leading scholar in the field of environmental scarcity, has written that violent conflicts in the developing world will be induced or aggravated by scarcity. Fresh water has become an increasingly scarce resource that may not directly cause intra- and inter-state conflict but can encourage it – particularly in areas where it is a declining resource such as the parched Middle East.

[Winterless Korea](#)

Koreans have long compared their country to a ``brocade embroidered with beautiful rivers and mountains through four distinct seasons." Toward the end of this century, however, they may have to change it to a ``subtropical paradise of everlasting summer" if a recent government report on climate change proves correct.

Lovers of warm weather, tropical fish and fruit may find little wrong with ``winterless Korea," but what this climatic upheaval means on a global scale – drought, famine and rising seas – will not be that simple.

[Engineers planning dam to protect the capital from catastrophic floods](#)

ENGINEERS are considering an elaborate dam system (pictured left) in the centre of Dublin Port to fend off the worst effects of global warming.

Under the proposals, a series of tidal gates would be erected between the end of two piers stretching into Dublin bay, in an attempt to stop the flooding of the quays in Dublin city centre as part of a "worst case scenario" study.

[Greening the church: a reluctant sacrifice or a new lease of life?](#)

Taking responsibility for our actions, fighting for justice and living in harmony with the rest of creation are among the founding principles of every religion. So why is there is no interfaith, or even inter-Christian statement on climate change?

[Electricity demand sputters; bills may fall](#)

For decades as Americans bought more electronics, more appliances, air conditioners and other gizmos, energy demand has only moved in one direction and prices have followed suit.

The decline in power usage over the past year is a rarity and also an indication of how badly the recession has jolted the economy and changed the way Americans spend.

The shift began last year, when power consumption fell 1.6 percent. Government forecasters see consumption falling another 2.7 percent this year. That would mark the first time since 1949 that the nation has seen energy demand fall in consecutive years.

[Pemex head replaced amid production slump](#)

Mexican President Felipe Calderon has replaced Jesus Reyes Heroles as boss of state-owned oil monopoly Pemex as the country battles to boost output and its reserves cache.

Calderon replaced Reyes Heroles with Juan Jose Suarez, a former banker and beer executive, according to a Reuters report.

Calderon urged Suarez to “accelerate the exploration and exploitation of new gas and crude reserves”.

[Putin Blinking on Exports Signals Lower Oil for OPEC](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Russia is surpassing Saudi Arabia in oil exports for the first time since the Soviet Union's collapse as Prime Minister Vladimir Putin exploits OPEC production cuts to gain market share.

[OPEC set to hold supply steady, likes oil price](#)

VIENNA (Reuters) – Oil at close to \$70 means OPEC will almost certainly keep existing output cuts in place when it meets in Vienna on Wednesday, although it could seek to tighten compliance with existing targets, ministers and delegates said.

"The market is in very good shape, very well supplied, the price is good for everybody, consumers and producers," Saudi Oil Minister Ali al Naimi said on arrival in Vienna in the early hours of Tuesday.

[Australia: Caltex in \\$300m remote fuel deal](#)

POWER and Water has awarded a contract worth \$300 million to Caltex for diesel and kerosene fuels to power remote communities for the next five years.

[Oil giant Shell prepares to cut jobs](#)

Royal Dutch Shell managers are beginning the grim task of telling staff where job cuts will fall as new chief executive Peter Voser wields the axe

[Oil Ties Draw Flak in Lockerbie Case](#)

Scottish Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill, who recently released the Lockerbie bomber, has a brother who is an energy-industry executive and who has worked at firms that have pitched for oil business in Libya.

The Scottish government, which has said that it made full disclosure of facts relevant to the decision, didn't disclose this relationship, and opposition politicians on Monday criticized this.

[Venezuela to move legally over Conoco refinery bid](#)

CARACAS (Reuters) - PDVSA will take legal action over the ConocoPhillips bid to buy out the Venezuelan state company's share in the Merrey Sweeney refinery in the United States, a senior PDVSA official said.

[Divided Venezuelans march for, against Chavez](#)

CARACAS (Reuters) – Thousands of Venezuelans marched on Saturday in protests against President Hugo Chavez while thousands of his supporters held their own rallies, a sign of the sharp split in the OPEC nation over the socialist leader's policies.

Chavez remains popular with the poor and workers after living standards rose during an oil boom. But other Venezuelans are fiercely opposed to the leftist leader who has nationalized much of the economy and this year clamped down on opposition politicians and the media.

[Renewable energy plan creates rift](#)

AMBOY, Calif. — The morning heat hits triple digits as a whiptail lizard darts below a creosote bush near Route 66. Gazing across the desert valley, power company executives, environmentalists and federal land managers stand beneath a cloudless sky and argue over the landscape.

PG&E project manager Alice Harron says she is "comfortable" with the solar power plant her utility wants to build on government land here along 4 miles of the Mother Road that connected Chicago and Los Angeles long before the interstate system.

David Myers of the Wildlands Conservancy is not. Renewable energy projects such as this one — which could power 224,000 homes — sound good in theory, he says, but if they tear up pristine vistas, they're not "green."

['Green the Capitol' initiatives save energy, set a good example](#)

The House of Representatives alone used to dispose of 240,000 meal remains each month, all served on plastic plates or in Styrofoam containers. It was all thrown in the trash and taken to landfills, says Karissa Marcum, deputy press secretary for the chief administrative officer for the House of Representatives.

But in January 2007, the House committed to becoming a greener, more energy-efficient institution. It started with simple changes, such as switching to more eco-friendly products and finding better ways to dispose of waste products, says Marcum.

[India to set industry efficiency targets by Dec 2010](#)

NEW DELHI (Reuters) – India hopes to set up by December next year energy efficiency targets for more than 700 industrial units, which account for 40 percent of India's fossil fuel use, the country's head of energy efficiency said on Monday.

Energy efficiency is a focus in India's climate change policy and setting targets for energy-intensive industries marks a step towards initiating a national trading scheme centred on energy efficiency certificates.

[Japan's Next Premier Vows to Cut Emissions Sharply](#)

TOKYO — Japan's presumptive prime minister breathed new life on Monday into efforts to curb global warming, standing by a campaign pledge to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent in the next 10 years from 1990 levels — a target that environmentalists said puts Japan at the forefront of the fight against climate change.

Nonetheless, the incoming prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, whose center-left Democrats swept to a landmark electoral victory last month, attached what appeared to be a new caveat to his pledge, saying it was contingent on similarly ambitious goals by other major polluters.

[EU welcomes Japan climate plan](#)

BRUSSELS – The European Union is welcoming plans by Japan's incoming prime minister to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 25 percent by 2020.

EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said Tuesday the proposal is "really very encouraging" for those trying to negotiate a new global climate change pact.

[China reiterates developed countries should massively cut greenhouse gas emissions](#)

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- China reiterated here Tuesday that developed countries should take more responsibility in massively cutting greenhouse gas emissions in a new global pact on climate change.

[Massey Energy CEO blasts climate bill at WVa rally](#)

HOLDEN, W.Va. – The chief executive of coal mining giant Massey Energy blasted

supporters of climate-change legislation and other environmental issues affecting the coal industry at a free Labor Day concert and rally in southern West Virginia.

CEO Don Blankenship said he wanted to show people at the event how government regulation is hurting the coal industry, driving up energy prices and making the country less competitive.

[19% fall in greenhouse gas emissions](#)

Scotland`s greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 19% since 1990, annual figures have revealed.

[Tiny arctic town mans climate's front line](#)

TUKTOYAKTUK, Northwest Territories -- Caught between rising seas and land melting beneath their mukluk-shod feet, the villagers of Tuktoyaktuk are doing what anyone would do on this windy Arctic coastline. They`re building windmills.

That`s wind-power turbines, to be exact — a token first try at "getting rid of this fossil fuel we`re using," said Mayor Merven Gruben.

[Maldives too broke to attend climate summit: president](#)

MALE (AFP) – The Maldives, whose fight against rising sea levels has become a cause celebre for environmentalists, said Monday it would have to skip UN climate change talks in Copenhagen this year to save money.

"We can't go to Copenhagen because we don't have the money," President Mohamed Nasheed told reporters, adding that he was staying away to set an example of cost-saving to the rest of the government.

[Seas 'threaten 20m in Bangladesh'](#)

Up to 20 million people in low-lying Bangladesh are at risk from rising sea levels in the coming decades, according to new research.

Scientists predict that salty water could reach far inland, making it hard to cultivate staple foods like rice.

[Climate change: no Eden, no apocalypse](#)

I am primarily a climate scientist who has worked with climate data, models and scenarios. But I am now more interested in how we think and talk about climate change, how we use the idea to support various projects, and how - paradoxically - we could use it to make the world a better place. I argue that just as we need to understand the physical changes that are sweeping the planet, we also need to understand climate change as a cultural and psychological phenomenon.

[Canada's Kyoto failure a warning to summit: study](#)

PARIS - Canada's failure to meet its Kyoto commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions is being used as ammunition by a U.S. think-tank to argue in favour of reducing expectations at the Copenhagen climate-change summit this December.

The Council on Foreign Relations paper asserts the United States and other western countries should seek incremental progress from emerging major carbon emitters such as China and India rather than push these countries to accept the kind of specific emission caps set out in the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The author, Michael Levi, argues hard caps would be impossible to sell to the most powerful countries in the developing world unless the objectives were so weak that they would be useless, potentially counterproductive, and almost impossible to enforce.



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